

Good Posture for Spine Health

Maintaining good posture is a simple yet effective way to keep the structures in the back and spine in good working order. Good posture and back support are essential in reducing back and neck pain. Even sitting at a desk all day can wreak havoc on the back and neck, resulting in pain.

Good Posture

The Cleveland Clinic Department of Patient Education and Health Information defines posture as the position in which one holds his or her body upright against gravity. Good posture involves training the body to stand, walk, sit, and lie in ways to place the least amount of strain on muscles and ligaments. There are many physical benefits to having good posture, such as:

- Keeping your bones and joints in the correct alignment to ensure that muscles work properly
- Decreasing abnormal wear on joint surfaces
- Decreasing the stress on ligaments which hold the spine together
- Preventing the spine from fixing in an abnormal position
- Lessening fatigue
- Preventing strains, backaches and muscular pain

Contributions to Bad Posture

Though it is not a conscious decision most of the time, many workers have bad posture which can result in injuries. Here are some common behaviors that contribute to bad posture:

- Shoulders hunched forward while slouching
- Forming a “swayback” (also known as lordosis) in which there is an inward curve in the lower back
- Carrying a heavy load on one side of the body
- Cradling a phone receiver between the neck and shoulder
- Slumping or sliding in a forward position in a chair

Helpful Solutions

Want to ease strains and prevent back and neck pain? Here are some helpful tips for standing, sitting, and lying down.

Standing Properly:

- Put your chin in and keep your head up
- Keep your earlobes in line with the middle of your shoulders
- Keep shoulder blades back and chest forward
- Keep your knees straight and tuck in your stomach
- Extend your head towards the ceiling

Sitting Properly:

- Place your shoulders back and your back straight
- Evenly distribute your body weight on both hips
- Bend your knees at a right angle and keep your feet rested flat on the floor
- Adjust chair height to sit close to your workstation
- Do not twist at the waist to grab something, turn your entire body
- Avoid sitting in the same position for more than 30 minutes

Lying Down Properly:

- Lie in such a way to maintain the curve in your back such as on your back with a pillow under your knees
- Place a lumbar pillow under your lower back or on your side with the knees bent
- Sleep on a firm mattress with a box spring that does not sag

Getting Too Little - or Too Much - Sleep May be Bad for the Heart

Even after accounting for other known risk factors for heart disease or stroke, a new study has found that people who sleep less than six hours or more than eight hours a night have significantly greater odds of having plaque buildup in the walls of their carotid arteries – a 54% and 39% increase, respectively – compared with those who got seven or eight hours of shut eye. The study adds to mounting evidence that sleep patterns, similar to diet and exercise, may play a defining role in someone's cardiovascular risk.

"The message, based on our findings, is 'sleep well, but not too well.' Getting too little sleep appears bad for your health but too much seems to be harmful as well," said Evangelos Oikonomou, MD, consultant cardiologist and the study's lead author. "Unlike other heart disease risk factors such as age or genetics, sleep habits can be adjusted, and even after taking into consideration the impact of established risk factors for atherosclerosis and cardiovascular diseases – for example age, gender, obesity, smoking, hypertension, diabetes, high blood pressure and even a history of coronary artery disease – both short and long sleeping duration may act as additional risk factors."

Researchers said that adopting a balanced sleep pattern of six to eight hours nightly may be just what the doctor ordered.

"It seems that this amount of sleep may act as an additive cardioprotective factor among people living in modern western societies, and there can be other health benefits to getting sufficient and quality sleep," Oikonomou added.

The amount of sleep someone needs depends on several factors, especially one's age. In the U.S., most guidelines recommend that adults sleep between seven and nine hours each night. Yet, one out of every three American adults does not get enough sleep, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Poor sleep has also been linked to a higher risk of obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, poor mental health and even dying early.

American College of Cardiology. "Getting too little – or too much – sleep may be bad for the heart: Clocking seven or eight hours of shut eye a night seems to be sweet spot for heart health." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200318104451.htm (accessed May 19, 2020).

To Stay Positive, Live In the Moment - But Plan Ahead

"It's well established that daily stressors can make us more likely to have negative affect, or bad moods," says Shevaun Neupert, a professor of psychology at NC State and corresponding author of a paper on the recent work. "Our work here sheds additional light on which variables influence how we respond to daily stress."

Specifically, the researchers looked at two factors that are thought to influence how we handle stress: mindfulness and proactive coping.

Mindfulness is when people are centered and living in the moment, rather than dwelling in the past or worrying about the future. Proactive coping is when people engage in planning to reduce the likelihood of future stress.

The researchers found that engaging in proactive coping was beneficial at limiting the effect of daily stressors, but that this advantage essentially disappeared on days when a participant reported low mindfulness.

"Our results show that a combination of proactive coping and high mindfulness result in study participants of all ages being more resilient against daily stressors," Neupert says. "Basically, we found that proactive planning and mindfulness account for about a quarter of the variance in how stressors influenced negative affect."

"Interventions targeting daily fluctuations in mindfulness may be especially helpful for those who are high in proactive coping and may be more inclined to think ahead to the future at the expense of remaining in the present."

North Carolina State University. "To stay positive, live in the moment – but plan ahead." ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/03/200325130650.htm (accessed May 19, 2020)..

Multitasking In the Workplace Can Lead To Negative Emotions



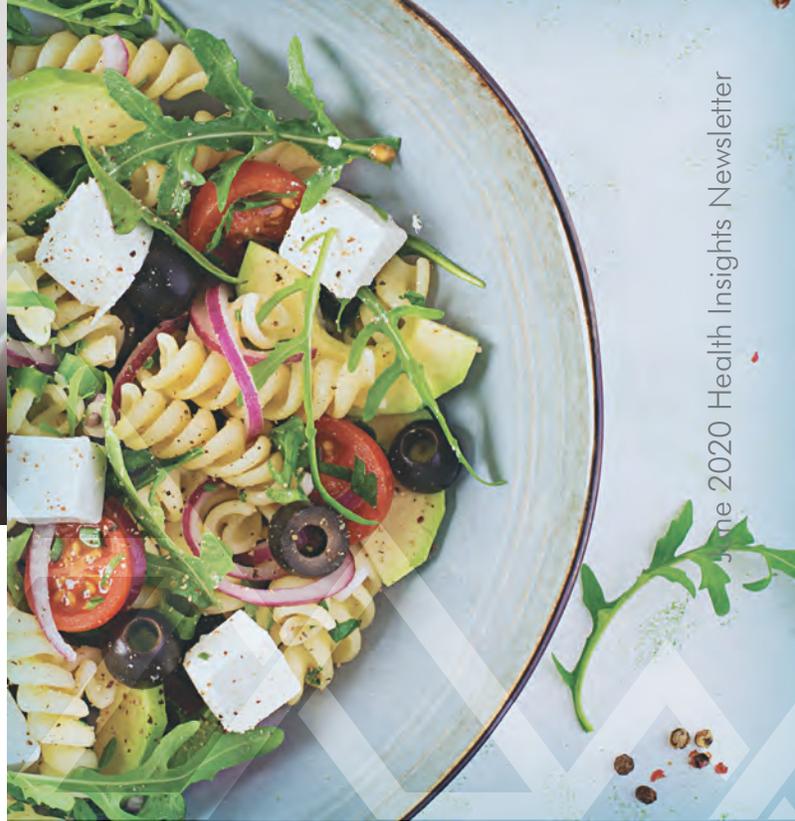
From writing papers to answering emails, it's common for office workers to juggle multiple tasks at once. But those constant interruptions can actually create sadness and fear and eventually, a tense working environment, according to a new study aimed at understanding what shapes the emotional culture of a workplace.

"Not only do people experience stress with multitasking, but their faces may also express unpleasant emotions and that can have negative consequences for the entire office culture," said study senior author Ioannis Pavlidis, director of the Computational Physiology Laboratory at the University of Houston.

"Individuals who engaged in multitasking appeared significantly sadder than those who did not. Interestingly, sadness tended to mix with a touch of fear in the multitasking cohort," Pavlidis said. "Multitasking imposes an onerous mental load and is associated with elevated stress, which appears to trigger the displayed sadness. The simultaneous onset of fear is intriguing and is likely rooted to subconscious anticipation of the next disruption," he added. Because multitasking is a widespread practice, the display of these negative emotions can persist throughout the workday for many people. It is this ubiquitous, continuous and persistent character of the phenomenon that renders it such a dangerous 'climate maker', the researchers emphasized.

The facial expressions of the workers who answered emails in one batch remained mostly neutral during the course of their uninterrupted writing task. However, there was an element of anger during the separate email task, perhaps attributed to the realization of the amount of work needed to process all the emails in one session, the researchers theorize. The good news is that email batching is localized in time and thus its emotional effects don't last long. Solutions are possible in this case; the team suggests addressing the email batch at a later time when responding to emails is the only task, recognizing that won't always be possible due to office pressure.

Negative displayed emotions – especially in open office settings – can have significant consequences on company culture, according to the paper. "Emotional contagion can spread in a group or workplace through the influence of conscious or unconscious processes involving emotional states or physiological responses."



Greek Pasta Salad

- 3 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- ½ C olive oil
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp. oregano
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 16 oz pasta (rotini, cavatappi or bow ties), wheat or gluten-free
- ½ C halved pitted kalamata olives
- 2 tablespoons brine
- ½ C red onion, diced
- 3 C (from 1 large) English cucumber, diced
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 orange bell pepper, diced
- ½ C feta cheese, cubed
- fresh oregano, optional garnish

Bring a large pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Add the pasta and cook according to package directions for al dente, adding an extra minute. Drain and rinse under cold water. Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine the dressing ingredients. Add the olives, red onion, and brine from the olives and mix to combine. Stir in the pasta, cucumber, tomatoes, and bell pepper and toss well. Add the cheese and oregano (if using) just before serving.

Gina Homolka. "Greek Pasta Salad." *Skinnytaste*, May 21, 2020. <https://www.skinnytaste.com/greek-pasta-salad/>.

University of Houston. "Multitasking in the workplace can lead to negative emotions: Study finds constant email interruptions create sadness and fear." *ScienceDaily*. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/05/200511154850.htm (accessed May 19, 2020).

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